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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Fifty-ninth session

Summary record of the 66th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 29 September 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Sadi

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports (*continued*)

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the Philippines (continued) (E/C.12/PHL/5-6; E/C.12/PHL/Q/5-6 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Philippines took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said that the previous administration's plans to build state-of-the-art prison facilities funded by public-private partnerships were under review by the new administration. Under the new campaign to combat the drugs trade, law enforcement agencies must observe the rules of engagement. If police officers were found to be at fault in drugs raids which resulted in the death of a suspect, they were immediately relieved of their position. The Government planned to build four large-capacity drug rehabilitation centres in 2017, local government authorities were reconstructing existing facilities, and the Department of Health was already training personnel in the provision of residential and non-residential care to drug users. The Philippine Sports Commission, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, businesses and church groups were also involved in efforts to assist the reintegration into society of almost 1 million individuals.

3. The setting of the minimum wage was a balancing act between addressing the needs of workers and employers and avoiding the inflation of wages and prices. While there was no living wage in place, wage levels were above the poverty threshold. The wage boards had issued advisories on productivity-based wages and had operated a pilot programme in the tourism sector to enhance productivity. Under that programme, which was to be expanded to other industries and sectors, firms which made productivity gains had to share those gains with their workers.

4. **Ms. Villaruel Aragon** (Philippines) said that in 2015, 18,040 of the 50,161 establishments assessed were in compliance with the minimum wage legislation. The informal economy accounted for 61 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015. The proportion of the workforce engaged in the informal sector had dropped from almost 45 per cent in 2005 to just over 34 per cent in 2015. Government initiatives, including providing access to training, start-up capital and toolkits, had increased productivity in the informal sector over the previous six years. Between 2011 and 2015 the Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment programmes had benefited 475,000 individuals, and an average of 1 million workers per year had completed community-based technical or vocational training. In 2013, the Government had relaxed the eligibility requirements and simplified the enrolment procedures for people in informal employment who wish to join the PhilHealth national health insurance scheme. In the same year, the Emergency Employment Programme had provided income for 35,000 typhoon victims. The bill for the protection of workers in the informal sector which had been submitted to parliament was aligned with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204) and the provisions of the Covenant.

5. The practice of "*endo*", or labour-only contracting, which was prohibited under articles 106 to 109 of the Labour Code, entailed the supply of workers by a subcontractor in conditions where the subcontractor did not have substantial capital, and where the workers supplied were to perform activities directly related to the main business of the principal contractor. The practice was prevalent in the agriculture and service sectors and was spreading to the corporate sector. The Department of Labour and Employment had

implemented a three-pronged national action plan to put a stop to "*endo*" contracting. Under that plan, labour regulations would be strictly enforced. As of September 2016, 16 regional offices had conducted 134 consultations on contractual issues with more than 9,000 tripartite representatives from all industries and sectors. That process, combined with more than 5,600 inspections, had resulted in the regularization of almost 7,500 workers. The Department was also conducting a comprehensive review of rules and regulations, with input from a wide range of stakeholders; the findings of that process would be forthcoming. A total of 17 bills revising provisions of the Labour Code had been sent to parliament.

6. As of December 2015, 17,066 trade unions existed in the country. Membership totalled 1.4 million workers and had increased by almost 13 per cent in the 10 years to 2015. A total of 1,149 collective bargaining agreements were in place, covering more than 190,000 workers. Labour management councils operated as a mechanism for labour management cooperation programmes and had maintained work stoppages in the single digits for the previous five years. Sector-based voluntary codes of good practice were a step towards self-regulation by industries and the cultivation of a culture of social responsibility.

7. The Government had prioritized legislative amendments to reduce the minimum membership requirements for the registration of unions, rationalize government intervention in labour disputes, and allow foreign individuals and organizations to engage in union activities.

8. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said, with regard to low birth registration, that the Philippines was observing the Asia and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade (2015-2924). The National Economic and Development Authority and the Philippine Statistics Authority were working in partnership with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos and the National Council on Disability Affairs to design programmes to increase the birth registration rate, which stood at 94 per cent, and to improve vital statistics in general.

9. **Ms. Rebong** (Philippines) said that problems relating to the registration of children born to Filipinos overseas stemmed from the refusal of certain countries to issue birth certificates for babies born out of wedlock. Changes had been made to the consular system, so that a birth certificate was no longer required as part of the process to register Filipino children overseas; parents could simply present an affidavit attesting to the birth, signed by either themselves or a birth attendant.

10. The Magna Carta for Women had been adopted in 2009, and concerted efforts were being made to raise its profile among the population. The Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality Plan was aimed at safeguarding women's rights, including for vulnerable groups such as indigenous, Muslim and migrant women, and at mainstreaming women's concerns in the performance targets of all government agencies. Local government units had an important role to play in implementing the Plan. Under the Magna Carta, all government bodies, including local units, were obliged to allocate 5 per cent of their budget to implementation of the Plan. The Commission on the Status of Women provided training for gender and development focal points. In light of the provisions in the Code of Muslim Personal Laws which discriminated against women in respect of early marriage, polygamy and divorce, efforts were being made to involve Muslim women in dialogue with the aim of harmonizing that Code with the Magna Carta.

11. The bill to amend the Anti-Rape Law of 1997 made the absence of consent the core element of the definition of rape, placed the burden of proof on the perpetrator, and repealed the provision whereby a rapist could be pardoned if he subsequently married the victim. It also raised the age of statutory rape from 12 to 16 years. It was hoped that the bill would be adopted in the current parliamentary session.

12. The Government was of the view that the increase in reports of violence against women was a positive development, which reflected a greater awareness among women of their rights and the mechanisms in place to protect them. Previously taboo topics, including sexual harassment in the workplace, violence against children and marital rape, were beginning to be discussed in the Philippines.

13. **Ms. Angeles-Natividad** (Philippines) said that legislators would seek to refile the bill on divorce. Although divorce was not permitted, divorces obtained abroad by foreign spouses were recognized under Philippine law, and the Family Code of the Philippines provided for legal separation and marital annulment. Declarations of nullity could also be obtained for marriages considered invalid from the beginning. The Government, in conjunction with civil society organizations, would continue to push for the divorce bill to be adopted.

14. **Mr. Paras** (Philippines), citing paragraph 46 of the report, said that legislation had been adopted that strengthened efforts to fight against human trafficking. In particular, a new law expanded the list of actions regarded as promoting trafficking, criminalized the act of attempted trafficking, enhanced the preventive measures taken to protect potential victims and removed the veil of confidentiality from persons accused of trafficking, among other measures. Trafficking a child was considered to be qualified trafficking and was punishable by life imprisonment and a fine of 2 million Philippine pesos (Pts).

15. The Department of Social Welfare and Development had issued guidelines on minors travelling abroad, in order to protect them against trafficking, and a memorandum of understanding had been concluded to harmonize government agencies' efforts and strategies aimed at tackling that crime. Furthermore, the Bureau of Immigration had issued guidelines on departure formalities for internationally bound passengers at all airports and seaports. Guidelines had also been issued on the institutionalization of gender-responsive case management as a practice model to be used in handling cases of violence against women, including the trafficking of women. Finally, a number of measures, listed in the replies to the list of issues, had been taken to protect those affected by natural disasters from becoming victims of trafficking.

16. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said that, as the provision of health care had been partially devolved, public expenditure on that area was not limited to the budget of the Department of Health. The latest available figures, which dated from 2013, indicated that 4.6 per cent of GDP had been allocated to the provision of health services. As the budget of the Department of Health had been increased, the figures for subsequent years were expected to be even higher.

17. Although the Supreme Court had placed a temporary restraining order on the issuance of reproductive materials and devices, the Government was doing everything possible to make such commodities available. According to a legal opinion that had been requested, the restraining order applied to the Government and not to private facilities or civil society organizations. Where possible, bridge funding was provided to enable non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver reproductive materials and reproductive health programmes to communities.

18. **Ms. Cabotaje** (Philippines) said that efforts were being made to review and assess the legal status of abortion in the Criminal Code. In the meantime, the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act obliged State-run service providers to provide humane and compassionate treatment to all women needing care for post-abortion complications and all other complications arising from pregnancy. The same Act allowed for abortion in extreme situations when the life of a pregnant woman was at risk. The rise in the number of unsafe abortions might have been caused by the unavailability of contraceptives. Information and education campaigns in the area of sexual and reproductive

health needed to be stepped up and the root causes of the rise in the number of unsafe abortions had to be addressed.

19. **Ms. Padilla** (Philippines) said that the primary mandate of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, PhilHealth, was to ensure that all Filipinos, especially those belonging to poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups, had access to affordable health care services. Figures dating from December 2015 indicated that 92 per cent of the projected population for 2015 was covered by the National Health Insurance Programme. Forty-nine per cent of the members of the Programme were indigent; around 30 per cent were employed in the formal economy; 9 per cent worked in the informal economy; 8 per cent were senior citizens; 2 per cent were sponsored members; and 2 per cent were lifetime members. The 8 per cent of citizens who were not covered by the Programme consisted of documented and undocumented overseas workers, homeless persons, indigenous persons, and persons with disabilities, among others.

20. The Point-of-Care programme supported poor patients who were not covered by the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction. The premiums of such patients would be paid for by the national government, while the premiums of poor pregnant women were paid for by local government authorities. As part of the efforts undertaken to build peace, the national government had set up programmes which ensured that certain families in conflict-affected areas had access to affordable health care.

21. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said that the State party would be submitting more detailed information concerning the list of issues.

22. The problem of low birth registration was not an obstacle to education, as parents whose children did not possess a birth certificate could enrol them in school by presenting an affidavit of identity. The number of children who dropped out of school had been falling.

23. **Ms. Bayangos** (Philippines) said that the K to 12 Education Programme sought to introduce learner-oriented education and provide every child with a high-quality education based on a pedagogically sound curriculum in line with international standards. Specific programmes had been enhanced to meet the educational needs of indigenous peoples and the Muslim community, among other groups. Improvements had also been made to information systems, school management, assessment methods, capacity-building programmes, educational resources and infrastructure. The K to 12 Education Programme allowed pupils to choose a course of study from among four available programmes, in accordance with their skills and interests. The implementation of the Universal Kindergarten had helped to prepare young children to enter formal education.

24. Over the previous seven years, the Government budget allocated to education had been increased considerably, and per-learner spending had more than doubled between 2010 and 2015. The Government aimed to increase its spending on education to 6 per cent of GDP, in line with international standards.

25. Two main strategies had been adopted to support the education of children with disabilities. Graded children with disabilities entered the mainstream education system and were enrolled in the appropriate year group. Non-graded children had more serious disabilities and were mainly trained in social and life skills. Teachers who worked with learners with special educational needs were identified and given appropriate training in a range of areas, including emotional and behavioural disorders and communication. Classrooms had been designed with ramps since 2001, and school buildings were currently fitted with ramps and toilets for persons with disabilities. However, more measures needed to be taken to make school sites and entrances accessible.

26. The funds allocated to educational programmes for children with disabilities had been increased by over 43 per cent between 2011 and 2015, and an office for student

inclusion had been created to harmonize such programmes. The office was currently developing an inclusive education framework, which would direct learners with special educational needs towards particular programmes. Plans were in place to improve the data held on children with disabilities and to use that data to design programmes and policies that would benefit them. Lastly, efforts were being made to establish partnerships with different organizations and academia, in order to train teachers in the use of assistive technology and devices.

27. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said that, although GDP had increased for the country as a whole, some provinces had been left behind. In order to tackle the problem of poverty, the provinces of the country had been placed in three different categories: those where the number of poor people was high but the proportion of such people was low; those where the number was low but the proportion was high; and those where people had been affected by multiple natural disasters. The Government planned to ensure that growth continued, while examining the reasons why certain provinces and communities failed to benefit from it and tailoring strategies accordingly.

28. The Conditional Cash Transfer Programme aimed to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by providing families with financial support if the children attended school, the mother sought health care and the family as a whole attended awareness-raising sessions on children's and women's rights. As the real value of cash transfers had been eroded, the possibility of increasing the amount transferred was currently being discussed at the highest level. Modified conditional cash transfers, which included assistance for housing, had been made available for indigenous persons, homeless persons and persons displaced by conflicts and natural disasters. The beneficiaries of such payments had to remain housed for at least one year in order to maintain their eligibility in the following year.

29. Following a series of studies, efforts had been made to improve the availability of infrastructure so that the recipients of conditional cash transfers were able to fulfil the conditions on which their payments depended. For example, if no medical centres were present in a particular area, the relevant authorities had to ensure that a mobile facility was made available. In that regard, a health facility enhancement programme had been carried out since 2014.

30. Aside from the old-age pension, which currently stood at Pts 500 per month, elderly persons benefited from automatic inclusion in the National Health Insurance Programme and received free medical prescriptions for certain chronic conditions. The budget for that programme had risen by 50 per cent in the previous year and would be significantly increased in subsequent years, owing to a downward adjustment in the age of retirement to 60 years.

31. Relocation assistance, involving the provision of temporary shelters, transitional shelters and permanent new homes, was provided to those affected by Typhoon Haiyan. Although some of the new homes were located in areas that were far from water sources, efforts had been made to overcome that problem by laying down pipes and providing the necessary infrastructure.

32. **Ms. Trinidad** (Philippines) said that the Government planned to increase the national housing budget. A number of programmes were currently being implemented, on: relocation of informal settler families residing in low-lying areas or affected by Government projects in Metro Manila; regional-level resettlement; upgrading of existing settlements; provision of mortgages; distribution of Government-owned land; and assistance for victims of natural disasters, including the provision of free housing, building materials and low-interest loans. More liberal housing loan repayment terms and extended

repayment periods had been introduced, along with renewable leases and a one-year moratorium on repayments of housing loans after relocation.

33. Homelessness was not a result of evictions. Under the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992, eviction and demolition were authorized only where informal settler families were living in dangerous areas, on a site earmarked for use in a Government infrastructure or development scheme, or on private land covered by a valid court order. In the first two cases, evictions and demolitions were ordered by the competent administrative authority, while in the third case, the courts issued the corresponding order. In addition, local inter-agency committees consulted with stakeholders prior to any action being taken.

34. Social housing for persons with disabilities complied with the design standards contained in the national building code and the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities, and persons with disabilities were given priority with regard to the allocation of ground-floor accommodation. Additional information on the 57 documented incidents of forced eviction and demolition by militia and armed forces referred to by a member of the Committee would be welcome. Under the President's policy of no demolition without relocation, the competent authorities had been instructed to ensure that families were relocated to areas close to their previous homes, in order to ensure continuity with regard to their livelihood and support services. Basic services would be provided at resettlement sites.

35. In its 2008 concluding observations, the Committee had called for reinforcement of the mandate of the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor "as the sole clearing house for the conduct of demolition and eviction", in accordance with Executive Order No. 152 of 2002. In that regard, work was ongoing to formulate a national resettlement framework policy; international practice with regard to resettlement and relocation action planning was being adopted; and stakeholders and affected families must be consulted prior to the issuing of any court order authorizing demolition. In addition, Memorandum Circular No. 2506 had been issued harmonizing the rules governing illegal structures.

36. **Ms. Shin** asked for additional information on health expenditure in 2013 to be provided in writing. The Government was responsible for implementing the Covenant and could not rely solely on NGOs to carry out tasks such as the distribution of contraceptives.

37. She said that the delegation had not responded to the points she had made related to abortion. The State party might wish to take into account the Committee's general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health and amend domestic legislation and policies on abortion accordingly. She asked whether the State intended to provide interpreting services for persons with sensory disabilities appearing before the courts or seeking to access health-care services.

38. The gender wage gap in the State party was considerable. The national authorities should look into the situation of women working in sweat shops, who were paid less than the minimum wage, suffered exploitation and sexual harassment, were called on by employers to work extra hours at home, and were threatened with dismissal should they complain to a labour inspector. She said that she hoped that the State party's next periodic report would contain concrete results and disaggregated data related to the Government's efforts to implement the provisions of the Covenant.

39. **Mr. Kedzia** said that the Committee had been informed that human rights defenders, in particular those active in the fields of land and women's rights, mining and anti-corruption, were often subjected to harassment, sometimes leading to deaths. As part of the universal periodic review process, a number of countries had called on the State party to cooperate with special procedures mandate holders and allow them to carry out visits to the Philippines to examine a range of issues, including the deaths of human rights defenders. The State party's response in that regard had been lukewarm. He asked the delegation to comment on that situation. Additional information on the dangers faced by human rights

defenders, other than extrajudicial killings, would be welcome. No information had been provided on assistance for people living with HIV or hepatitis C infection. The prevalence rate of hepatitis C infection in the State party was extremely high, yet the Committee had been informed that the Government would not be providing any funding for new drugs to treat that condition.

40. **Mr. Uprimny** said that the adoption of severe measures against drug dealers and users was overwhelmingly counterproductive, making it difficult for addicts to access treatment, creating health issues and prison overcrowding, and placing pressure on health-care resources. The prison population in the State party had doubled over the previous 16 years, rising to 140,000 prisoners. Overall prison capacity currently stood at 34,000 inmates. The number of women detainees had quadrupled over the same period, increasing to over 12,000. Many of those persons currently incarcerated were directly or indirectly linked to the drugs trade. Harm reduction projects, such as syringe exchange programmes, were rare in the State party. Consequently, over 40 per cent of opioid-dependent drug users were HIV-positive. In 2014, only around 4,000 drug users had been able to access treatment. He asked whether the national authorities intended to replace their war on drugs with harm reduction strategies, substitution therapies and evidence-based treatment for drug users. President Duterte had recently made a number of statements that appeared to endorse the use of lethal force against drug dealers and users. There had been around 2,000 extrajudicial killings of such persons, mainly carried out in poor areas, and the Committee was concerned that they might be linked to police or State-sponsored actions. Social and health programmes covering drug users had been cut back. He asked what strategies had been put in place to halt extrajudicial killings and investigate and punish the perpetrators, what the Government was doing to ensure that its war against drugs did not become a war against the poor, and what impact cuts in the health and employment budgets would have on persons affected by the war on drugs. Anti-drugs policies, such as "social cleansing" and the killing of drug users and petty criminals, were undemocratic and undermined the rule of law and respect for human rights.

41. **Mr. de Schutter** (Country Rapporteur) said that, under recently introduced legislation, Government departments were no longer obliged to allocate 1 per cent of their budget to disability issues, a requirement which, it appeared, had previously only been met by a few departments. Additional information in that regard would be welcome.

42. As to the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, he asked whether the condition-based approach adopted under the Health Facilities Enhancement Programme was replicated with regard to schools. How did the national authorities provide for the large number of children with disabilities not currently enjoying access to schools, and how was compliance with conditions assessed in that regard? He would appreciate information about how the national authorities identified and provided cash transfers to homeless persons. It appeared that families with children with disabilities received the same amount of State support as those with non-disabled children; should that be the case, the national authorities might wish to consider aligning levels of support with the specific needs of individual families. The Conditional Cash Transfer Programme did not identify persons as right-holders who could claim benefits from an independent body on the basis of conditions that had previously been brought to their attention, but rather employed geographical targeting and the identification of categories of beneficiaries. It was important to take a rights-based approach when issuing cash transfers. Additional information in that regard would be welcome. He asked for an update on the status of the Magna Carta for Workers in the Informal Economy. The delegation had not provided answers to his questions on the prioritization of adoption of the Zero Hunger Bill, the possibility of a follow-up to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme Extension with Reforms, and the Government's plans to tackle extreme poverty among fishers affected by declining fish stocks.

43. **Ms. Bras Gomes** said that she had obtained her information on the living wage in the State party from the independent IBON International Foundation, which had calculated that the minimum wage was insufficient to ensure an adequate standard of living for a family of five persons. Her information on trade unions and collective bargaining came from the Centre for Trade Union and Human Rights of the Philippines and the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.

44. She asked whether the Magna Carta for Workers in the Informal Economy provided for a social protection floor. Additional information on any benefits and pension rights offered under the "*endo*" system would be welcome. Under the Covenant, minimum wages constituted a basic measure designed to ensure a decent standard of living. The Committee was concerned that the productivity rate-based two-tier wage system employed in the State party might result in a lowering of minimum wages; clarification would be appreciated in that regard. The Committee's general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work provided guidance on the difference between minimum wages and fair wages.

45. **Mr. Mancisidor de la Fuente** said that although the delegation had provided valuable information on initiatives targeting children with disabilities, it had not produced any statistical data related to improvements in those children's situation. He asked what percentage of that population group did not currently enjoy access to the education system.

46. **The Chair**, speaking in his capacity as a member of the Committee, asked whether poverty lay behind the significant drug-related issues currently facing the State party. An approach based on friendly persuasion might not be sufficient to convince certain ethnic and religious groups to comply with the provisions of the Magna Carta for Women.

The meeting was suspended at noon and resumed at 12.10 p.m.

47. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said that the Committee would be provided with detailed information on health expenditure once the corresponding data had been collected. The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act had been deemed to be constitutional. A temporary restraining order on the distribution of contraceptive implants had been introduced related to certain provisions of the Act, but it did not cover private-sector health practitioners. The Department of Health distributed contraceptives and had prepared a road map for meeting requirements in that regard up to 2020, as part of the Government's ten-point socioeconomic agenda. Women's associations had highlighted the need for legislation to decriminalize abortion, although no bills had yet been presented. Culture and religion represented significant obstacles in that regard. Assistance, including interpreters, was given to persons with disabilities who had been victims of violence.

48. The number of labour inspectors had increased dramatically, although more were needed. While there were sanctions for employers who violated standards governing working conditions, it was difficult to detect those who failed to pay the minimum wage. That problem could also be tackled by strengthening trade unions. By opening offices of the National Labor Relations Commission in all regions, the Department of Labour and Employment had streamlined the complaints process, thus increasing the number of complaints filed and reducing the time taken to respond.

49. **Ms. Angeles-Natividad** (Philippines) said that citizens' rights to freedom of speech, expression and peaceful assembly and to petition the Government were fully respected, and the State encouraged and facilitated human rights advocacy. Administrative Order No. 35 introduced several mechanisms to address extrajudicial killings, media killings, enforced disappearances, torture and other grave human rights violations and expanded the definition of extrajudicial killings. However, deaths resulting from anti-drug operations were not politically motivated and were not therefore extrajudicial killings, but criminal acts subject to judicial proceedings. In total, 1,089 extrajudicial killings, media killings, enforced

disappearances, and instances of torture and other grave human rights violations had been reported since 2001, of which 394 were deaths within the scope of the Administrative Order. Eight convictions had been secured for extrajudicial killings and 13 for media killings.

50. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said that four bills on the right to food had been filed since the start of the current administration. The gathering of data on persons with disabilities was hampered by disagreements regarding the methodology to be used, and while the Department of Education possessed data on the number of persons with disabilities enrolled in education, the denominator was unknown. The State was willing to fund a census of persons with disabilities once a methodology had been agreed upon and the necessary capacity-building completed.

51. Homeless persons eligible for the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme were given housing and rent assistance for six months, on the condition that they did not return to the street. That assistance could be extended for up to two years. The Programme took a rights-based approach in that it attempted to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty by addressing children's needs and their right to education and health, regardless of their parents' actions. It also combated maternal mortality and provided assistance for pregnant women. The extension to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme Extension with Reform had been submitted to Congress.

52. **Ms. Rebong** (Philippines) said that special procedures mandate holders were invited to the country regularly; two mandate holders and one working group had been welcomed in 2015. Sufficient time was needed between visits in order to coordinate the government agencies involved. The State party encouraged the work of human rights defenders and regularly supported Human Rights Council resolutions related to their protection. The Government was endeavouring to reconcile the Code of Muslim Personal Laws with the Magna Carta of Women by working with Muslim women's associations and mounting information campaigns to combat discriminatory provisions in the Code.

53. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said that a meeting with the IBON International Foundation to define an adequate standard of living would be useful. A technical working group had established a social protection floor, and those who earned the minimum wage were exempt from income tax. The practice of ending employment contracts after five months was illegal. Unemployment benefit was available only to those who had been working in the Government sector, and bills that would have extended it to other sectors had been rejected. A technical study was being planned to examine the need to extend the benefit, together with consultations with workers' associations, employers, Government bodies and social security agencies. Drug addiction was viewed as a health issue, and a full package of services, including education and health services, was offered in order to rehabilitate users and reintegrate them into society.

54. **Ms. Cabotaje** (Philippines) said that drug users were assisted by Government agencies, NGOs and religious groups. The strategy included the identification and classification of users, community-based rehabilitation programmes and support for their reintegration. More than 700,000 drug users had sought help, of whom less than 1 per cent required inpatient treatment, between 2 and 10 per cent were referred to outpatient facilities, and 90 per cent were assisted by community-based programmes. However, several shortcomings had been identified, including a lack of capacity in inpatient facilities, a failure to establish community-based programmes, and a need for more policies and guidelines. The new law on HIV/AIDS would include a harm reduction strategy for drug users.

55. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said that there was no deliberate effort to target the poor during anti-drug campaigns; the list of persons involved in the drug trade drawn up by the President consisted mainly of prominent figures.

56. **Mr. Bunyi** (Philippines) said that the budget for the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources had increased from Pts 6.7 billion in 2016 to Pts 7 billion in 2017, of which 60 per cent was allocated to poor fishing communities, where targeted actions aimed to reduce poverty, improve economies and support livelihoods. A fund had also been established to improve productivity and processes in the sector, facilitate livelihood projects and manage fisheries and aquatic resources, thereby enhancing food security. Enhanced fishery management measures also prioritized artisanal and small-scale fishers, and the owners of large vessels caught fishing in municipal and coastal waters had been sanctioned. Alternative employment opportunities were provided during the closed season, and the poorest households benefited from the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme and would receive low-cost rice through the planned Rice for the Masses programme.

57. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines) said that the main goal of the recently created government department for information communication technology was to address the growing digital divide. Two major projects were already under way: one provided free wireless Internet access in public places and another installed Internet access points in regions where such infrastructure was lacking.

58. **Mr. De Schutter** said that he wished to thank the delegation for its responsive, detailed and high-quality answers to the Committee's questions. While the Philippines was a complex country that faced significant challenges, the quality of its governance would enable it to overcome them. Its innovative approaches in many areas were a source of inspiration to other countries.

59. **Ms. Rebong** (Philippines), after thanking the Committee for the fruitful dialogue, said that the State party was committed to human rights, due process and the rule of law, as demonstrated by its ratification of many international instruments and the active role played by citizens and civil society in promoting and protecting human rights.

60. **The Chair**, while praising the State party's progress, said that achievements must be based on the Covenant. He thanked the delegation for their efforts.

The meeting rose at 17.55 p.m.